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DAY OF HEALING



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had worn during Bobby's presidential campaign.

His father, Mr. Kennedy explained, had died about a year ago.

"I'm here both to thank this country and as a tribute to the president and my father," he said.

Individuals in the crowd had individual reasons for attending. Some wore the plastic badge with the gray question mark of the Assassination Symposium on John F. Kennedy — ASK. The conspiracy buffs also wore buttons reading "Oswald did what?" "Oswald was a patsy" and "Hoover knew."

Zapruder's perch, the concrete column from which Abraham Zapruder shot history's most famous home movie exactly 30 years before, was again a camera stand for amateur photographers.

Phillip Barwinkel of Arlington, wearing his ASK badge, captured the dedication ceremony on videotape. He had staked out the location Monday morning.

"This is the place," he said.

But he had little patience for the official speeches.

"This part's just the feds," he said. "These are the bad guys."

Dan Metzger of suburban Chicago shared the perch. Unlike many on the knoll, he had no favorite conspiracy theory.

"I'm kind of not sure," he said. "I think we should remember Kennedy for the president he was, rather than how he died."

Some people stood in the street, exactly where President Kennedy's car had passed as bullets hit him. Monday's visitors looked back at the sixth-floor window in the old school book depository, where the sniper's nest was found after the shooting.

John McDermott, a tourist from Ireland, scanned the ground for guidance about just where the fatal shot struck.

"I thought the spot was marked," he said. "No?"

The reality of the plaza seemed smaller than it had looked on TV, he said. For Mr. McDermott, only 24, the assassination was just history. But he empathized with others nearby who knew exactly where they were when they heard the news.

"That applies in Ireland, too," he

said. "My parents can tell me where they were."

The official ceremonies trod gently on the brutal reality of the events of three decades ago. The printed program that heralded the dedication of the "Dealey Plaza National Historic Landmark District" mentioned President Kennedy's name once and the assassination not at all.

The modest plaque marking the site is set flat against the gentle incline of the bottom of the grassy knoll, a metal smear to drivers who will whiz past. President Kennedy's name isn't on it.

Security for Monday's ceremony — on one level, just a dedication of a plaque in a public park — was pervasive. More than 200 Dallas police officers and sheriff's deputies lined the approaches, stood atop and inside every nearby building or hovered overhead.

Along the bridge over the speaker's stand, 17 mounted officers lined up in front of about 20 police cars. The roads into the plaza were blocked off by flatbed trucks carrying concrete lane dividers. Motorcycle officers stood by their bikes a block away.

Paul "Funn" Dunn, a radio talk host from Bloomington, Minn., was only one of many in the crowd with the same reaction to the show of force.

"If they had this kind of security 30 years ago, we wouldn't be here now," he said.

The precautions worked. Police reported no trouble and no arrests. killed the president that they can't do it again."

Mr. Dunn said he has filled many mornings with interviews and discussions about who really killed JFK. Mr. Dunn was here, he said, "to show the powers that be that

For those like Mr. Dunn who are fascinated by the details of those days, Monday was a first-person bonanza.

Neelie Connally, wife of the late



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Emma Pierce (center) of San Francisco wipes a tear as David Switzer (left) from Gardner, Kan., and Ines Nordmeier (right) of Dresden, Germany, listen as Dealey Plaza is designated a National Historic Landmark.

Texas governor who himself was wounded 30 years ago, spoke from the podium. And wandering through the crowd were other eyewitnesses.

Bob Leavelle, the Dallas homicide detective wearing the cowboy hat and the stunned expression as Lee Harvey Oswald was gunned down, was instantly recognizable in the same style hat. He courteously answered questions and signed autographs.

Beverly Oliver-Massegee, known to assassination buffs as the "Babushka Lady," held court Monday on the south side of Elm Street. The babushka in question was a scarf worn by a witness captured in pictures 30 years ago.

Ms. Oliver-Massegee gained fame when she became among the first to claim that shots were fired from behind the picket fence on the grassy knoll. Over the years, however, the veracity of her claims has come into question.

Some, including Gerald Posner, author of the recent best-seller *Case Closed*, even say that Ms. Oliver-Massegee is not the same woman

caught on film as the presidential motorcade passed.

On Monday, Ms. Oliver-Massegee, 47, was only one voice in a chorus of Posner-bashing.

"I'm going to sue Gerald Posner, and I'm going to sue CBS," she said. The network recently featured Mr. Posner in a two-hour special on the assassination in which he attacked Ms. Oliver-Massegee's claims. "No matter what Gerald Posner says, I know what I saw. I've never changed my story."

A few hours after the official ceremonies, Ms. Oliver-Massegee was one of the stars of a smaller gathering. More than 200 people marched from the Kennedy Memorial to the grassy knoll to review their favorite flavor of conspiracy: the military, the Mafia, the Cubans, the media.

The march along the presidential motorcade's last four blocks was organized by Peter Lemkin, a full-time assassination researcher and lecturer from Solana Beach, Calif.

The quiet procession lasted about five minutes and ended at the grassy knoll, where the marchers mingled with several hundred others who were already there.

The ensuing 90 minutes consisted of speeches by assassination witnesses and researchers, none of

whom believed that Oswald acted alone. Mr. Posner's name and research were frequently derided, along with the official explanation that Oswald, alone, killed the president.

"Something happened here 30 years ago — 30 years ago and several hours ago," Mr. Lemkin said. "Many shots were fired. More than three shots were fired."

Not everyone who showed up at the Kennedy Memorial on Monday came to discuss theories, though. Jacqueline Edwards, 63, stood alone in the northwest corner of the structure, hardly noticed by anyone until she started singing.

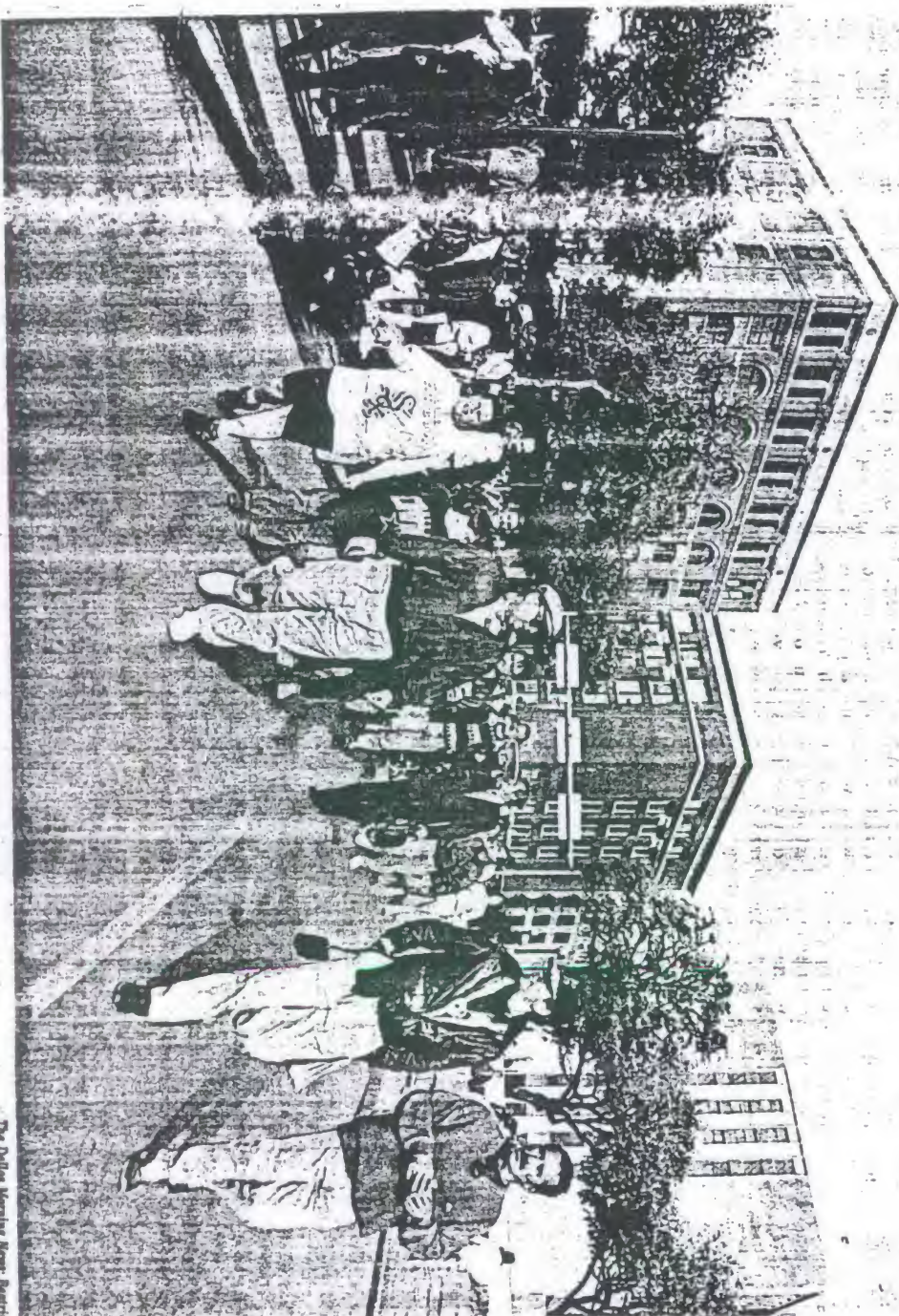
Ms. Edwards said that she has been going regularly to the memorial and to Dealey Plaza ever since the assassination.

"I used to come more than what I do now," she said. "I've been having some health problems lately. I mostly sing aloud here, because I guess the way the walls are made, it has that sound to it, and you can just let it flow."

Selections on Monday included *America the Beautiful*, *The Lord's Prayer* and a song she wrote called *Pray for Peace*.

"I kind of feel like this is an obligation — that I have to do this, I should do this," she said. "In remembrance of JFK."

Staff writer Al Brumley contributed to this report.



The Dallas Morning News Staff

People attending ceremonies in Dealey Plaza to commemorate the 30th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's death march the last block of the route the presidential motorcade took on the day of the assassination.